

REMARKS

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-8 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Additionally, claims 1-4 and 6-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by McCune in U.S. Patent No. 3,139,704. Finally, claim 5 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over McCune (3,139,704) in view of Muta in U.S. Patent No. 4,216,738.

McCune teaches sandblasting the inside of a pipe to clear it of wall deposits. This is not the same as clearing a pipe of the flowable material in it. As mentioned in the introduction to the disclosure, this invention is concerned with alternatives to the use of pigs.

Pigs are used in plants such as beverage and liquid foodstuff processes to clear product out of pipes when there is a change of product - chicken soup, for example, instead of clam chowder. Frequently, pipes from a production vat to a canning station are of considerable length, may tens of yards at least. Because the introduction of a pig is deemed to contaminate the product in the pipe, the entire pipeful of product is dumped. With several product changes a week, often several a day, that is a lot of waste product and a considerable loss of revenue. Plus a considerable effluent problem.

Pigs are also liable to get stuck, and are positive, but slow in operation.

The method of the invention, because it does not involve pigs, means that the pipeful of product can be pushed to the canning or bottling station instead of to waste. One installation saves a soft drinks manufacturer well over \$1.5M annually, just in product that would otherwise have gone to waste.

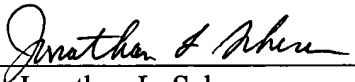
What McCune flushes out of the pipe first is not the flowable material conveyed in it, but loose debris - col 2, lines 35, 36. The Examiner refers to col 7, lines 20-25 where McCune teaches that the initial pressure is low with high inlet velocities during the sandblasting step, the suggestion here being that this is the second step and that is preceded by an earlier step in which the pressure is high and the velocities are low. This does not, however, appear to be the case - the initial purge is simply the same as the sandblasting step, but without the sand - loose debris cannot be shifted using a low velocity air supply. If anything, McCune teaches the opposite, namely high velocity. Low pressure, followed by increasing pressure, low velocity, but actually this is merely what happens when introducing pressure air into the pipe - the air in the pipe is at atmospheric pressure to begin with, and, because of resistance to the flow of air, pressure builds up to a steady state level, reducing the velocity - this is not a positive process step, merely an observation as to what happens, and precisely the same thing would happen during the initial purge.

Based on the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the claims in the present application, as they now stand, patentably distinguish over the references cited and applied by the Examiner and are, therefore, in condition for allowance. A Notice of Allowance is in order, and such favorable action and reconsideration are respectfully requested.

However, if after reviewing the above amendments and remarks, the Examiner has any questions or comments, he is cordially invited to contact the undersigned attorneys.

Respectfully submitted,

JACOBSON HOLMAN, PLLC

By: 
Jonathan L. Scherer
Reg. No. 29,851

400 Seventh Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004-2201
(202) 638-6666
Date: December 19, 2005
JLS/arc